

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 269

Urging the Government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt that opened on November 15, 2003.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 20, 2003

Mr. LEVIN (for himself and Ms. COLLINS, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. REED, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. DODD, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. JEFFORDS, and Mr. KENNEDY) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt that opened on November 15, 2003.

Whereas on November 15, 2003, the Government of Canada opened a commercial hunt on seals in the waters off the east coast of Canada;

Whereas an international outcry regarding the plight of the seals hunted in Canada resulted in the 1983 ban by the European Union of whitecoat and blueback seal skins, and the subsequent collapse of the commercial seal hunt in Canada;

Whereas the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) bars the import into the United States of any seal products;

Whereas in February 2003, the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada authorized the highest quota for harp seals in Canadian history, allowing nearly 1,000,000 seals to be killed over a 3-year period;

Whereas harp seal pups can be legally hunted in Canada as soon as they have begun to molt their white coats at approximately 12 days of age;

Whereas 97 percent of the seals culled in the 2003 slaughter were pups between just 12 days and 12 weeks of age, most of which had not yet eaten their first solid meal or learned to swim;

Whereas a 2001 report by an independent team of veterinarians invited to observe the hunt by the International Fund for Animal Welfare concluded that the seal hunt failed to comply with basic animal welfare regulations in Canada and that governmental regulations regarding humane killing were not being respected or enforced;

Whereas the 2001 veterinary report concluded that as many as 42 percent of the seals studied were likely skinned while alive and conscious;

Whereas the commercial slaughter of seals in the Northwest Atlantic is inherently cruel, whether the killing is conducted by clubbing or by shooting;

Whereas many seals are shot in the course of the hunt, but escape beneath the ice where they die slowly and are never recovered, and these seals are not counted in official kill statistics, making the actual kill level far higher than the level that is reported;

Whereas the commercial hunt for harp and hooded seals is not conducted by indigenous peoples of Canada, but is a commercial slaughter carried out by nonnative people

from the East Coast of Canada for seal fur, oil, and penises (used as aphrodisiacs in some Asian markets);

Whereas the fishing and sealing industries in Canada continue to justify the expanded seal hunt on the grounds that the seals in the Northwest Atlantic are preventing the recovery of cod stocks, despite the lack of any credible scientific evidence to support this claim;

Whereas 2 Canadian Government marine scientists reported in 1994 that the true cause of cod depletion in the North Atlantic was over-fishing, and the consensus among the international scientific community is that seals are not responsible for the collapse of cod stocks;

Whereas harp and hooded seals are a vital part of the complex ecosystem of the Northwest Atlantic, and because the seals consume predators of commercial cod stocks, removing the seals might actually inhibit recovery of cod stocks;

Whereas certain ministries of the Government of Canada have stated clearly that there is no evidence that killing seals will help groundfish stocks to recover; and

Whereas the persistence of this cruel and needless commercial hunt is inconsistent with the well-earned international reputation of Canada: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the Senate urges the Government of
- 2 Canada to end the commercial hunt on seals that opened
- 3 in the waters off the east coast of Canada on November
- 4 15, 2003.

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